

May 21, 2003

I-90 Steering Committee
Sound Transit Board Members

Dear:

I am writing on behalf of the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board and the Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board over recommendations recently made by the I-90 Steering Committee, which is currently proposing in its "Alternative R-8a" a reduction of width of the bicycle facility on the I-90 floating bridge in Seattle from 10 feet to 8 in order to incorporate an additional highway lane. Also incorporated in the build alternative is a recommendation for a reduction in highway shoulder width, further narrowing the separation between motorized and non-motorized users of the bridge.

We find this proposal entirely unacceptable. Our primary concern is that it violates Federal standards taken from the America Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) design manual that sets a 10-foot minimum width for non-motorized trail facilities. The 10-foot standard has also been incorporated by WSDOT and in the Seattle Street Design Manual. A reduction in width of this facility would therefore violate written standards at the Federal, State and local levels.

Beyond violation of standards, we are especially concerned over safety hazards posed by the proposed reduced width of this trail. Steadily increasing use of the trail, combined with its close proximity to a major highway, require the maximum separation possible between motor vehicles and trail users. The AASHTO manual recommends a minimum width of 10 feet for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, regardless of level of use. Being directly adjacent to a busy highway, 10 feet is an absolute minimum for the I-90 Trail along the floating bridge and East Channel Bridge.

Finally, as a matter of public policy, we believe that use of alternate transportation modes should be encouraged, not discouraged. We recommend strongly maintenance of the current facility width, or better, an increase of trail width to 12 feet, rather than a decrease of trail width that almost certainly will have a negative effect on trail use and safety. We are also concerned about the increased traffic and its effects on safety and air standards that would result from the two additional lanes proposed for I-90.

We urge you to reconsider and reject Alternative R-8A as unsafe, in violation of local and Federal standards, and contrary to policies at all levels of government that encourage increased use of alternate transportation modes and a reduction in single occupancy vehicle use. We urge you to instead adopt Alternative R-2B, the "Safety Solution", which will keep the bridge safe for bicyclists and pedestrians, improve transit speed and reliability and preserve the center roadway for future light rail.

Sincerely,

Charles R. Smith, Member
Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board
SPAB Liaison to Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board